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THE SOVIET ICBM PROGRAM

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM

CONCLUSIONS

RELEASE IN FULL

(The full text of this estimate is
being published separately.)

Submitted by the

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, The Joint Staff, and the Atomic Energy Commission.

Concurred in by the

INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

on 10 December 1957. Concurring were The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff; and the Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the IAC. The Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of his jurisdiction.

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THE SOVIET ICBM PROGRAM

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the probable development timetable and characteristics of the Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), including the probable date of first operational capability, and to examine the factors likely to affect Soviet acquisition of a substantial nuclear delivery capability with the ICBM weapon system.¹

CONCLUSIONS

1. ICBM development has an extremely high priority in the USSR, if indeed it is not presently on a "crash" basis. We believe that the USSR will seek to acquire a substantial ICBM capability as rapidly as possible.

2. We believe the USSR is concentrating on the development of an ICBM which, when operational, will probably be capable of carrying a high-yield nuclear warhead to a maximum range of about 5,500 nautical miles, with a CEP of five nautical miles or less at maximum range, and a system reliability of about 50 percent. The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Army, believes that the USSR will adopt initially an opera-

tional ICBM of at least 3,800-4,500 nautical miles maximum range, and that it will further develop this weapon to the longer-range system indicated above.

3. The date at which the USSR will have a first operational capability with the ICBM will depend on many factors, apart from the over-all urgency of the program. These factors include the extent of technical success in missile testing and the availability of launching facilities, supporting equipment, and trained personnel to operate the system. We estimate that some time during the period mid-1958 to mid-1959, the USSR will probably have a first operational capability with up to 10 prototype ICBMs, with characteristics approximating those estimated in the first sentence of Conclusion 2.²

¹For purposes of this estimate, a "first operational capability" is arbitrarily defined as a total of 10 prototype ICBMs in the hands of trained units at completed launching sites; a "substantial operational capability" is arbitrarily defined as a total of 500 ICBMs in the hands of trained units at completed launching sites.

²In the belief of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Army, this initial operational capability will be with an ICBM of at least 3,800-4,500 nautical miles maximum range.

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4. ICBMs could probably be produced, launching facilities completed, and operational units trained at a rate sufficient to give the USSR an operational capability with 100 ICBMs about one year after

its first operational capability date, and with 500 ICBMs about two or at most three years after first operational capability date.

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